

Questions for "Tuning Up" a Lesson Plan or Assignment

Part 1: Focus on Goals and Performances

I. About the Understanding Goals:

- Are they really goals for students' understanding or are they goals about what students should do (behavioral objectives)?
- If they are behavioral objectives:
 - Why is it important for students to be able to do those things?
 - What will it develop their understanding of?
- Answering these questions should get you to some new understanding goals—write these down.
- Can you phrase your understanding goals as open-ended questions?
- If you have a lot of understanding goals: Pare down to the ones you most care about.

II. About Performances of Understanding:

- What are the things that students are being asked to do in this lesson or assignment?
 - Which of them are activities (things that students do but that do not require understanding)?
 - Which are performances of understanding (asking students to use what they know in new ways)?
- For the things that you think are performances of understanding:
 - Could a student do those things without really understanding? Could the student get by on a good memory or being a good spitter-backer?
 - (If the answer is yes: How could those activities be turned into true performances of understanding?)

III. About the Match between Goals and Performances:

- For each understanding goal, is there at least one performance of understanding that connects directly to it?
- For each performance of understanding: Is there at least one understanding goal that connects directly to it?
- If there is an unmatched understanding goal or performance of understanding: Do you want to keep it? If so, find it a partner. If not, cross it off.
- For each assessment opportunity, think of one other thing you could get the students to do that would help those whose understanding seems limited or partial.

Questions for "Tuning Up" a Lesson Plan or Assignment

Part 2: Focus on Assessment

I. Why will you assess? Criteria for understanding:

At each assessment opportunity:

- What are you assessing for?
- Is it represented in your understanding goals? (If not, either the criteria or the goals need to be changed so that they match.)
- Have you made the criteria public for students and do they understand them?

II. When will you assess? Opportunities to do an "understanding check":

- What opportunities to assess student understanding (either informally or formally) are in your plan/assignment now?
- Where else could you build in an opportunity to assess students' understanding? (Try to get at least one in the middle of the class session, as well as one at the end. More is good, too, especially for longer, more complex learning activities such as projects or research papers.)

III. How will you assess? A variety of strategies for giving feedback:

- What strategies might you use?
 - Informal/formal (generally, early performances of understanding are relatively brief and so are assessed more informally than later, more complex performances of understanding.
 - Verbal/written
 - Instructional rubric/checklist
- Are your assessment strategies diverse?

IV. Who will do the assessing? A variety of perspectives:

- Self-assessment
- Peer assessment
- Teacher assessment
- Assessment by local experts, community members or others outside the classroom

V. Fall-back plan:

- What will you do when you find out not all students are understanding as well as you want them to?
- For each assessment opportunity, think of one other thing you could get the students to do that would help those whose understanding seems limited or partial.